

BEWARE OF LEONARD SWEET: MASTER OF DOUBLESPEAK

Enlarged June 7, 2012 (first published June 16, 2010) (David Cloud, Fundamental Baptist Information Service, P.O. Box 610368, Port Huron, MI 48061, 866-295-4143, fbns@wayoflife.org; for instructions about subscribing and unsubscribing or changing addresses, see the information paragraph at the end of the article)

Leonard Sweet is a United Methodist clergyman, “futurist,” historian, E. Stanley Jones* Professor of Evangelism at the very liberal Drew University, and founder and president of SpiritVenture Ministries. (Jones was a rank liberal Methodist missionary.)

Sweet is the author and co-author of more than 30 books, including *Quantum Spirituality: A Postmodern Apologetic* (1991), *Soul Tsunami* (1999), *Postmodern Pilgrims* (2000), *Carpe Mañana: Is Your Church Ready to Seize Tomorrow?* (2001), *Jesus Drives Me Crazy* (2003), and *The Gospel according to Starbucks* (2007).

He was twice voted “one of the 50 Most Influential Christians in America” by *ChurchReport* magazine.

Southern Baptist pastor Rick Warren recommends Sweet’s book *Soul Tsunami* (his recommendation is printed on the cover), which says, “It is time for a Postmodern Reformation ... Reinvent yourself for the 21st century or die” (p. 75). Warren and Sweet collaborated on an audio set entitled *Tides of Change*, and Sweet was scheduled to speak at Saddleback Church in January 2008 for a small groups training conference.

Sweet has spoken at Bill Hybels Willowcreek Community Church.

Sweet’s book *Jesus Manifesto* (co-authored by Frank Viola) was recommended by Southern Baptist Ed Stetzer.

Emergent leader Brian McLaren credits Sweet’s “brilliant and stimulating work” in *Carpe Mañana* with making him “a better pastor and a better Christian” (<http://www.leonardsweet.com/books.php>).

In an undated blog that I viewed on May 17, 2010, Sweet complained about his critics and pretended that he is being wrongly accused and persecuted. He rejects the charge that he is a New Ager and says he does not believe in the divinity of man. He further (and amazingly) pretends that he is theologically sound.

Actually, the man is speaking out of both sides of his mouth. He is a master of doublespeak.

If Leonard Sweet truly does not hold to a New Age philosophy, he needs to publicly renounce his books *Quantum Spirituality* and *Carpe Mañana*. He needs to apologize publicly and loudly for

his non-critical recommendation of New Agers. He needs to publicly and loudly expose and rebuke the errors of the heretics he has foolishly recommended.

He needs to stop pointing the finger at his “critics” and point the finger at himself in deep repentance.

Sweet promotes a New Age-like, universalist-tinged spirituality that he calls New Light and “quantum spirituality” and “the Christ consciousness.” He describes it in terms of “the union of the human with the divine” which is the “center feature of all the world’s religions” (*Quantum Spirituality*, p. 235). He defines the New Light as “a structure of human becoming, a channeling of Christ energies through mindbody experience” (*Quantum Spirituality*, p. 70).

He says:

“Quantum spirituality bonds us to all creation as well as to other members of the human family. New Light pastors are what Arthur Peacocke calls ‘priests of creation’--earth ministers WHO CAN RELATE THE REALM OF NATURE TO GOD, who can help nurture a brother-sister relationship with THE LIVING ORGANISM CALLED PLANET EARTH. This entails a radical doctrine of EMBODIMENT OF GOD IN THE VERY SUBSTANCE OF CREATION” (*Quantum Spirituality*, p. 124).

In his book *Carpe Mañana*, Sweet says:

“New Light embodiment means to be ‘in connection’ and ‘information’ with all of creation. New Light communities extend the sense of connectionalism to creation and see themselves as members of an ecological community encompassing the whole of creation. ‘This is my body’ is not an anthropocentric metaphor. Theologian/feminist critic Sallie McFague has argued persuasively for SEEING EARTH, IN A VERY REAL SENSE, AS MUCH AS A PART OF THE BODY OF CHRIST AS HUMANS. We are all earthlings. ... WE CONSTITUTE TOGETHER A COSMIC BODY OF CHRIST” (*Carpe Mañana*, p. 124).

At the end of the previous statement Sweet has a footnote that credits the phrase “a cosmic body of Christ” to New Ager Matthew Fox. In fact, this is the title to one of Fox’s deeply heretical books entitled *The Coming of the Cosmic Christ*.

Sweet calls for a “New Light movement of ‘world-making’ faith” that will “CREATE THE WORLD THAT IS TO, AND MAY YET, BE” (<http://www.leonardsweet.com/Quantum/quantum-ebook.pdf>, p. 12).

He says the New Light was experienced by Mohammed, Moses, and Krishna.

Sweet says that some of the “New Light leaders” that have influenced his thinking are Matthew Fox, M. Scott Peck, Willis Harman, and Ken Wilber. These are prominent New Agers who hold a

pantheistic philosophy and believe in the divinity of man, as we have documented in the book *The New Age Tower of Babel*.

In his 2012 book *I Am A Follower*, Sweet quotes Sufi poet Kabir who says, “God is the breath inside the breath.” Sweet then makes the following blasphemous, pagan comment:

“All of creation is made alive with the holy breath of the Creator. Breathing Yahweh breath is breathing the holy breath of life. Yahweh. ... Our breathing and heartbeat are in tune with the name. Breathe in ‘Yah’ and breathe out ‘weh’ ... I guarantee you will relax.”

Sweet calls the New Age Catholic priest Pierre Teilhard de Chardin “twentieth-century Christianity’s major voice” (*Quantum Spirituality*, p. 106). Teilhard promoted the “theory” of evolution, taught that God is the consciousness of the universe, that everything is one, and that everything is evolving in greater and greater enlightenment toward an ultimate point of perfection which he called CHRIST and THE OMEGA POINT. Teilhard spoke much of Christ, but his christ is not the Christ of the Bible. For this reason, Teilhard is a favorite with New Agers. (See our book *Contemplative Mysticism* for extensive documentation on Teilhard and a host of other influential modern-day mystics.)

Sweet promotes Catholic mysticism enthusiastically:

“Mysticism, once cast to the sidelines of the Christian tradition, is now situated in postmodernist culture near the center. ... In the words of one of the greatest theologians of the twentieth century, Jesuit philosopher of religion/dogmatist Karl Rahner, ‘The Christian of tomorrow will be a mystic, one who has experienced something, or he will be nothing’” (*Quantum Spirituality*, 1991, pp. 11, 76).

To call Rahner a great theologian is irrefutable evidence of Sweet’s spiritual blindness. Rahner was a Jesuit priest who believed in evolution and in salvation apart from personal faith in Christ. He spoke of the “anonymous Christian,” referring to an individual who unconsciously responds to God’s grace operating in the world, though he might even reject the gospel. “His approach allows him to suggest that the beliefs of non-Christian religious traditions are not necessarily true, while allowing that they may nevertheless mediate the grace of God by the lifestyles which they evoke--such as a selfless love of one's neighbor” (“Karl Rahner,” <http://www.island-of-freedom.com/rahner.htm>). See our book *Contemplative Mysticism* for more about Rahner.

Sweet defines mysticism as an “*experience* with God” in the metaphysical realm that is achieved through “mindbody experiences” (*Quantum Spirituality*, 1991, p. 11).

Sweet also cites as a major influence the Catholic-Buddhist mystic Thomas Merton. Sweet says humanity needs to learn the truth of Merton’s words, “We are already one” (*Quantum Spirituality*, p. 13). Merton was a universalist and a panentheist. If Sweet is theologically sound as he professes in his blog, why does he recommend Merton? Why doesn’t he rather warn his

readers of Merton's gross heresies, including his false sacramental gospel and worship of Mary? (See "Thomas Merton: The Catholic Buddhist Mystic," <http://www.wayoflife.org/database/merton.html>)

In emerging church fashion, Sweet is extremely relativistic and vague about doctrinal truth. For him everything is experiential. He acknowledges that "revelation has occurred" but this revelation only gives us "universal moral truths" and even these broad truths cannot be dogmatically understood because "knowledge about these truths is socially constructed" (*Postmodern Pilgrims*, p. 146). He says, "Objectivity can no longer be the sole objective of the pursuit of truth" (p. 146). Sweet quotes Lorraine Code as saying that "subjectivity--however conflicted and multiple--becomes part of the conditions that make knowledge possible" (p. 149). Sweet is supportive of the poet Robert Bly who said that he had no idea of the meaning of the ending of one of own poems (p. 149). Sweet says: "For Jesus truth was not propositions or the property of sentences. Rather, truth was what was revealed through our participation and interaction with him, others, and the world" (*Postmodern Pilgrims*, p. 157).

In light of his promotion of Catholic mysticism, it is not surprising that Sweet makes the following claim:

"One can be a faithful disciple of Jesus Christ without denying the flickers of the sacred in followers of Yahweh, or Kali, or Krishna" (*Quantum Spirituality*, p. 130).

Kali is the Hindu goddess of destruction. Krishna is the supposed incarnation of the Hindu god Vishnu. We are told that "as a youth, Krishna enchanted and intoxicated the cowherd women with his flute playing; he teased them and made love to them" (*Indian Gods*, Kent: Grange Books, 1998, p. 45, 47). Krishna's flute playing is said to "pull virtuous women from their homes and drag them to Krishna" and to make "chaste ladies forget their lords" (David Kinsley, *The Sword and the Flute*).

We would like to know exactly what "flickers of the sacred" Leonard Sweet finds in Kali and Krishna.

Do these supposed "flickers" put their adherents into a saving relationship with Almighty God and take them to Heaven?

I suspect that Sweet doesn't even believe in the necessity of salvation from eternal Hell. In fact, I suspect that he doesn't believe in the reality of Hell fire.

Maybe he will clarify these things in a future blog, but we will warn our friends to take anything the man says with a grain of salt unless he plainly renounces his own books and repents of the heresies he has formerly taught.

PRIVATE REPROOF VS. PUBLIC

June 5, 2012 (David Cloud, Fundamental Baptist Information Service, P.O. Box 610368, Port Huron, MI 48061, 866-295-4143, fbns@wayoflife.org; for instructions about subscribing and unsubscribing or changing addresses, see the information paragraph at the end of the article)

The following is excerpted from the new book *The Two Jacks: Hyles and Schaap*, which is available in print for purchase or as a free eBook from the Way of Life web site -- www.wayoflife.org.

The very fact that there are still many preachers today who believe a public warning about influential independent Baptist leaders is wrong is evidence that the spirit and error of Jack Hylesism is alive and well.

It is time for this heresy to be buried.

They say, “Who do you think you are to speak against such men?”

I can’t answer for others, but my personal answer to that is, “I don’t think I’m anybody at all. I’m just a frail and simple man God saved and called to preach, but I have His authority to speak and so does every other God-called preacher.”

God solemnly charges the preacher to identify false teachers, to exhort, reprove, and rebuke with all authority, to speak as the oracles of God, to earnestly contend for the faith, and even to warn about born-again compromisers (Romans 16:17; 2 Timothy 4:2; Titus 2:15; 1 Peter 4:11; Jude 3; 2 Thess. 3:6; 2 Tim. 4:10). Nowhere in Scripture are these commandments restricted in their scope. Nowhere does God say that a Bible preacher can reprove and rebuke only the members of his own church or that he can reprove and rebuke anyone who errs *except* an influential Christian leader.

To reprove public sin and error publicly by the Word of God under the guidance of the Spirit of God and in His wisdom is *not* slander and is *not* gossip and is *not* “throwing rocks” and is *not* “shooting the wounded” and is *not* hateful and is *not* dishonoring to Christ.

Private offenses and private sins need to be dealt with privately, but public errors need to be dealt with publicly. When a man builds an ecclesiastical empire, of sorts, and influences thousands of people beyond the borders of his congregation, his errors are no longer private matters and they are no longer matters pertaining only to his church.

When a man admits and repents of a sin or error, that is one thing and is dealt with in a certain way. But when an influential man covers up sins and errors and lies about them and even goes on the attack against those who try to expose them, that is another matter altogether and is to be dealt with in entirely a different way.

We must be very careful about what we say about men of God. We must be careful not to spread unsubstantiated rumors. We must be careful not to give heed to vindictive, disgruntled, backslidden people who are trying to injure the work of God. We must be very wise in what we say and in how we say it. We must make sure that we are speaking the truth, and we must test our hearts before God to make sure we are speaking the truth in the right spirit and for the right reason.

We don't publicly reprove every pastor who errs or call out every church that compromises. Contrary to the silly and slanderous accusation that some have made against us, we don't consider ourselves the "policeman of the IFB movement."

The reality is that some men's influence is much greater than others. Some men's ministries effect only their own congregation, whereas some men's affect tens of thousands.

When the sin of hypocrisy and the compromise of the principles of equality under the gospel was spreading in the early churches, the apostle Paul singled out Peter to rebuke before them all, for the simple reason that he was the most influential personality in that mess.

"But when Peter was come to Antioch, I withstood him to the face, because he was to be blamed. For before that certain came from James, he did eat with the Gentiles: but when they were come, he withdrew and separated himself, fearing them which were of the circumcision. And the other Jews dissembled likewise with him; insomuch that Barnabas also was carried away with their dissimulation. But when I saw that they walked not uprightly according to the truth of the gospel, I SAID UNTO PETER BEFORE THEM ALL, If thou, being a Jew, livest after the manner of Gentiles, and not as do the Jews, why compellest thou the Gentiles to live as do the Jews? We who are Jews by nature, and not sinners of the Gentiles, Knowing that a man is not justified by the works of the law, but by the faith of Jesus Christ, even we have believed in Jesus Christ, that we might be justified by the faith of Christ, and not by the works of the law: for by the works of the law shall no flesh be justified" (Galatians 2:11-16).

We must be wise in speaking, but speak we must when the situation merits it. Let us fear God more than man.

"The fear of man bringeth a snare: but whoso putteth his trust in the LORD shall be safe" (Proverbs 29:25).

"Little children, keep yourselves from idols. Amen" (1 John 5:21).

One can hide in the crowd in this life and take his "stand" with the weak-kneed majority, but no one can hide at the judgment seat of Christ.

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